644 The sogoné may not wear trousers. He wears a type of
357 drawers called benda. All the nanamsé (plural of naba) have
292 followed the example of Naba Warga, and nowadays the most insignificant kombéré has at least a dozen sogoné.

[161]

The Napogré. General Conditions. Number of Wives of the Emperor Today. Ornaments.

644 Depending on whether the napagha is destined for the chief
595 himself or for one of his brothers or sons, the instruction of the napogré are given either in the quarters of the pugtiéma (first wife of the naba) or at the home of one of the old nabissi.

644 Water is heated and in it is put a bit of karite butter and other
595 ingredients. After the girl's head, armpits, and public hair have
302 been shaved by some old women, the pugtiéma or the old man dips a hand into the water, utters certain cabalistic words, and gives the names of all the chiefs who have succeeded each other up to the father of the current ruler.

644 The water is then given to the old women who bathe the
595 young napagha. It is at this time that she is instructed in the duties and obligations of the napogré, what she may do and what she should avoid.

[301] The new wife is then adorned with bracelets, kouaba (plural of kobré), and with rouamba [ankle rings], or with only bracelets. The chief may marry her at once or, depending on the circumstances, send her to the man for whom she is destined.

[684] The napagha must never have relations with any man other than her husband as long as she lives. Formerly she was pitilessly killed if she broke this rule. [162]

[302 As we have just seen, the napagha has no hair, and this is
301] the primary distinctive mark. Also, she wears bracelets on her wrists, sometimes even on her arms and some on her ankles (this is done mostly by favorites). Finally some wear kouaba, ornaments most often worn by old women.

The number of wives or napagha varies according to the importance of the naba and especially according to the desires of naba. According to the 1926 census, the present Mogho Naba had thirty-seven wives.

644 It should be said that the napagha, who is regarded as a
595 piece of property, is part of the estate of a deceased chief. The
562 new naba takes some of the old and young wives, and the rest are
587 kept in the family of the nabissi. It is therefore not unusual to find women in the household of a naba who have been married to two or even three deceased chiefs. If they are not too old, they may give birth to children of the chief who is their second or third husband.

644 The establishment of a naba is often divided into three sec-
595 tions.

1. The zagkas sanga (the great house). All the old women, the unwanted ones, live here. Their mistress and guardian is the pugtiéma, who has charge of the house where the kimsé or manes of the ancestors live.

2. Zagbilin. The middle-aged women [163] who are still occasionally visited by their husband live here.

3. Dogoundba. This is the assemblage of several young and beautiful wives grouped around the favorite. They are called dogoundba, "guardians of the hut of the naba." These women receive all the favors, wear the finest ornaments, and are dressed in
[291] godé (1). Most of the time the dogoundba live in one or several

1. A skirt that is highly valued among the Mossi.

huts, depending on their number.

Each of the women in the other two sections has her own hut.

Since the naba has too many wives to be able to look after all of them, they must provide their own clothing and food. Hence, they are forced to cultivate plots and sell some of their produce. Each napagha has her own small field of millet, peanuts, beans, and peas.

The dogoundba have a collective plot. They help their husband who not only has to feed them, but is also required to support
[357] the sogoné and the samand'kamba (the latter are "people of the outer courtyard," another category of servitors who are sent on errands to the villages or who serve as grooms).

In the homes of the kombemba (plural of kombéré), it is the duty of the dogoundba to prepare food for the sogoné and for any

644 595 foreigners who are being housed by the naba. [164]

644 595 357 608 Each sogoné or samanbiga chooses a mother from among the wives of the naba (only those in the first two sections). He helps her to cultivate her plot of ground and receives in return a little food over and above the ration of sagbo given to the sogoné as a group.

At Nanore (1), for example, it was formerly the rule that

1. Canton in the administrative district of Koudougou.

when a woman brought some sagbo to her adopted son, she could not simply hand it to him. Instead, holes were dug in the courtyard of the naba, into which the woman put the sagbo and sauce. Then the young man came to eat the food, and later the woman came back for her bowls.

644 595 533 687 832 Finally, it is still forbidden for anyone to play a guitar when a napagha is passing by unless the player is the naba himself or someone called upon to play by the naba. It should be noted that the Moaga prefers the guitar for intimate occasions. Therefore, to play it when a napagha passes by is actually to court her.

The Pogsioure, or the Recruitment of Sogoné and Saman'kamba

643 562 Aside from a few special cases limited by custom which we shall presently describe, the naba can never dispose of the daughters of his subjects, either to make them [165] his own wives or to bestow them on someone else, without the permission of the parents.

Pogsioure comes from pog', the diminutive of pagha, "woman," and from sioure, diminutive of sioubo, "to give anticipating a profit."

562 431 643 As a result of family quarrels or even voluntarily, a Moaga "may give away his daughters and those of his brothers and close relatives to the naba." It is obvious that the naba cannot keep all of these girls, so he gives some of them to his brothers, his uncles, his sons, and even to ordinary Mossi who have done him a service.

In the same way -- and this is more frequent -- every sogoné (page) or samand'biga [singular of samand'kamba] (bodyguard or

588 582 751 wears a bracelet made of copper and iron intertwined, kalembanga, which is believed to protect the wearer against any disaster due to the technically illegal marriage. The kalembanga is also believed to protect the children born of the union from sudden death.

Polygyny

595 Polygyny is the rule throughout Mossi country. It is true that the number of wives varies with the resources and position of the individual. Mere heads of compounds who are somewhat well off may have [180] from five to eight wives and numerous fiancées. The [584] latter are usually reserved for the dakompa (older sons and younger brothers of the head of the family), assuming that these men will in turn render real service and be completely devoted to the head of the household.

There are many reasons for the practice of polygyny, but the main one is procreation. The under-nourished natives must rely on [853] the mother's milk to feed their babies and must therefore wait two [834] or even three years before resuming sexual relations with a wife who is a nursing mother. Therefore, they prefer to have several wives.

Consummation

585 When the young girl is taken to her husband, she is entrusted to a woman whom she will henceforth treat as "mother."

A few days after the departure of the cortege, whose composition we shall describe presently, the man claims his fiancée. She is taken at night to the nuptial hut, which has no special features, and no one is present at the consummation of the marriage. In this respect the Mossi differ from the Bambara, who have a griot or an old woman accompany the couple to help the young man, if necessary, overcome the girl's resistance.

It goes without saying that if the girl is found to be a virgin, the [181] husband is overjoyed. If she is not a virgin, the love which he may have felt for her before possessing her is much diminished. The man shows the girl his anger, certain that she will at least tell her mother about it.

342
412 Tools. The only tools used are the sitoiga (native pickaxe) and the wanka (hoe).

352 House furnishings. (a) The man's hut. The only furnishings in a man's hut are a mat or thin secco, a bolster made of cotton strips or kapok, a quiver, the club, some arrows, the bow, a large knife (zangoégo), and a spear. Small bags of charms and other amulets hang from the wall here and there, and there is a sort of oval straw basket, pilgou, in which clothing is stored.

(b) The woman's hut. From one end of the hut to the other there are billi, small pieces of wood fastened to the wall to hold gourds, bowls (lensé), earthenware basins (lassé), ladles (soutissi), etc.

In the rear of the room lumps of dried earth, [221] hollowed in the center, hold the vessels, and pots, dougdo, which serve both as storage bins for clothing and as granaries for the produce of the woman's own garden.

592 Plan of a compound. As one enters a compound, the huts to left are those of the women and the master's huts stand to the right. Completely outside the establishment, there are one or two straw huts, similar to those already described, which provide sleeping quarters for the dakompa (young men).

● [595] The head of the establishment lives alone. It could hardly be otherwise, since he summons his wives in turn.

The women live with their young children or with girls betrothed to their husband, until, of course, these girls receive huts of their own.

343 Kitchen arrangements. It is exceedingly rare among the Mossi to find a hut used specifically for cooking. The wife's bedroom serves also as a kitchen.

592 595 252 Ordinarily the husband issues provisions to the wife who is cooking for the family, but there are exceptions to this rule. At Ouagadougou, for example, most of the wives provide the food for the husband. The latter furnishes provisions only during the winter when the fields are being worked.

[222] The wives take turns preparing the food. The woman on duty is aided by her co-wives in grinding the millet on the millstone (néré) of the section, but she alone prepares the millet cake, sagbo.

423 will, and the new occupant cannot make the slightest protest.

It should be pointed out, however, that since land is most often abandoned because it was thought to be unproductive or haunted, there is rarely a claim to it by a former owner. In any event the matter is settled by the interested parties. The local administration and the canton chief rarely intervene in such cases.

Owners' rights over fruit trees in cultivated fields. Donsé
423 or néré [locust bean] trees whose fruits contain a yellowish, sweet
263 powder that is edible and [244] whose seeds are used to make soumbala, a fetid condiment much prized by the natives, remain the exclusive property of the former occupant. On the other hand, the tamsé (karite tree) belong to the new owner.

423 This is because the karite tree is found almost everywhere in the bush, while the néré is less common.

Rights of the chiefs over cultivated land. As a general rule,
425 since the principle of right by possession is honored among the
423 Mossi, a canton chief will not confiscate without reason cultivated land belonging to one of his subjects if the land has always been occupied by the occupant's grandparents.

When the land is unoccupied, however, or newly occupied, the canton chief may, by virtue of his absolute authority over his territory, take possession, and the new owner may not claim any compensation.

Field Work

241 In principle, a family field is held in common. When a woman
562 grows old, however, she no longer does field work with her hus-
595 band. She has her own field and feeds herself as best she may, since her husband pays no further attention to her and no longer supports her. The work is done by the family as a group, and the size of the field varies with the size of the family.

241 Early in the morning, usually before [245] sunrise, the head
512 of the family wakens the young people. They go out to the field, which may be five to ten kilometers away. Around ten o'clock, the women bring the remains of last night's sagbo or, lacking that, some millet flour which is taken in water.

584
583 have borrowed. In addition, he would expose himself and the preferred suitor to the vengeance of the rejected one.

583 The bride price is not exorbitant. The total gifts, spread over a period of years, amount to some fifty francs, without counting the work days. Nevertheless, it requires sufficient means to secure at least the necessary cowries. Besides, the child's father prefers to give her to someone who already boasts a certain fame and some wealth, in short, to an elderly man. /30/ This is why children are promised to old dotards, and white-haired men are paired with young girls; while the old men's sons of marriageable age cannot get wives. If the father has the means to pay the bride price, he carefully refrains from helping his son, even if the latter has found a match to his liking.

587 It is true that all the father's wives are inherited by the oldest son,
578 who gives some to his younger brothers; but this occurs only at the old man's death, and this may not happen for a long time. This ex-
593 plains why the oldest son wishes for his father's death, and why the father sends the son away for fear of a premature end. It is only fair to add that some men, with a better understanding of their own interests, marry off their sons as soon as they are old enough.

● 595 Polygamy exists among the Mossi as in all Black countries. The
[556] wealth of a man is gauged by the number of his wives. Women furnish hands to till the soil, for the wife works in the fields like the husband. Women also furnish children, and if these are daughters, young men will come to offer their services (dakonré) and one day take the girls in marriage; or the father will receive gifts. If the children are boys, they will later aid the father in his work. In these countries where each lives for himself alone, where selfishness reigns supreme, polygamy is easily explained, but it undoubtedly results in a lower birth rate. White-bearded old men cannot have children as numerous and sound as young men in their prime, and the latter, deprived of wives, wear themselves out with their excesses. It is true that those who can afford a dozen wives are few; most have to be content with two, three, or four. Some nabas, nevertheless, own veritable herds of women, and this is certainly a grievous abuse.

[837] Their wives are numbered in the hundreds. The greatest moral disorder reigns in those harems, where the boys who serve as grooms and pages spend most of their time among their master's wives. This explains the precautions taken by the women's owners and the eunuchs of the Moro Naba, as well as the Poënaba and his sinister duties.

593 reprimand them, while the mother's role, here as elsewhere, is to indulge her children.

595 The children of different wives are quite fond of one another and often exchange help. When the father dies, the eldest son make no distinction among his brothers and helps them all as best he can. Polygamy seems to present no drawbacks in this respect.

When a man has several wives, his first wife (porkyéma) is mistress of the household rather than his mother. All the other wives are on an equal footing, even the slaves, excepting, of course, those for whom the husband has a special preference. As the number of wives increases, so does the authority of the first wife, who wants /39/ her husband to have as many wives as possible. Each wife has a separate hut where she lives with her children, and this avoids many a quarrel. The husband goes to the hut of the woman he desires, or he has her come to his own hut. When a man works in his field, all his wives and children must help him, because he feeds them all and gives them a daily millet ration; it is, accordingly, only fair that all should take part in agricultural work within the limits of their capacity.

593 443 421 Provided that a woman remain at her husband's disposal and help him in the fields, she is free to do as she pleases. She goes to market to sell the grain, the spices for sauce, and the thread to weave cloth; but the husband sells the fabric strips and the raw cotton. During the winter each woman may have her own field to cultivate with her children, and the harvest belongs wholly to her. The husband has no say in the matter. If the woman spins cotton, she sells it at the market or even to her husband; if she brews beer, she offers one jar to her husband, but if he entertains friends and wants additional jars, he must pay cash for them. It is not unusual for a woman to refuse her husband credit, for who knows when he would pay?

593 574 A woman may visit her relatives with the permission of her husband, who sets a return date. The woman rarely comes back on the date set, and the husband goes to fetch her himself, or he sends one of his friends with a piece of salt or a small gift. A woman especially likes to visit her relatives when she is pregnant or shortly after the baby's birth. She knows that she will be well cared for and especially that she will enjoy complete freedom. As a result, it is not unusual for a woman to leave her husband for several months and to return only after considerable coaxing. Most quarrels between one Mossi and another derive from their wives and from their debts; yet it may not be said, as a general rule, that women are unhappy or ill treated. [578]

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
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their allegiance directly to the *Yatenga Naba* for historical reasons or because their chiefs are related to the royal lineage and superior within the social hierarchy to the local nobility (*nakomse*) to which the canton chiefs belong.

Subordinate, in turn, to the canton chief, is the village chief (*Tenga Naba*), who is the central authority in the aggregation of "quarters" (*sakse*) of which a Mossi village is composed. These quarters are the dwellings of patrilineal extended families and lineages (*boodoose*). Such a residence is called a *saka* if it contains the house of the lineage elder (*sak kasama*) or a *yiri* if it represents only a junior segment. In either case the dwelling of the oldest male in the group is surrounded by the separate houses of his wives, his younger brothers and their wives, and his sons, nephews, cousins, and their wives and children. Each adult individual has a separate house within the *saka*.

The smallest unit within the residence of the lineage is the nuclear family (*zaka*) composed of a man, his wife, and their children. If a man has more than one wife, the term *zaka pedere* (*zaka* half) may be used when the man's relationship with one of his several wives is being considered. He himself is called *zaka soba*. As a young man's family grows, each of his new wives is provided with a house adjoining his. In addition to his house and the houses of his wives, each man's household contains several granaries used to store the produce from the millet fields he has been assigned by his lineage. It is with the members of his own household that a man is in most frequent social and economic interaction. The fields he works with their assistance are the principal source of the food supply for the nuclear family unit.

The *yiri* is the next largest social unit within the *saka*. The term refers to the extended family dwelling inhabited by a man, his wives, his male children, and their wives and children. It may be composed of as many as fifteen separate nuclear families. While its inhabitants usually consist of the married sons of an older man and their nuclear families, it may also be composed of a man, his wife and children, and his younger brothers and their wives and children. Since its members are closely related within the lineage, there is greater social and economic interaction among them than there is with the other lineage members. As the *saka soba* is the principal and final authority within the *zaka*, the *yiri soba* is most important within the *yiri*.

Composed of the nuclear and extended family dwellings of its members, the Mossi residential unit is typically inhabited by all of the local representatives of the sib. In addition to the dwelling of the lineage elder, it contains the altar (*kiemserógo*) where the ancestral spirits of the lineage are worshiped. The lineage elder has authority over everyone living within his *saka*. As counselor to the village chief and intermediary with

644 "The Moro Naba, assisted by his ministers and with the help of frequent libations of dolo, listens to the requests which are made /572/ to him and passes sentence on the trials which are referred to him.

"Around eleven o'clock he withdraws into his hut and rests until three o'clock, at which time he comes and seats himself on his throne again.

"The Moro Naba's every gesture is prescribed by a minute protocol and accompanied by flute and drum music and finger snappings by his entourage.

"Is he riding out for a short stroll around Ouagadougou? The whole court follows him, either on foot or on horseback. His griot make the air re-echo with their shouts, to the accompaniment of drums and flutes. A groom leads his horse by the rein, while two soronś hold his stirrups and a third one, on horseback by his side, shelters him with a huge umbrella. Other pages follow carrying his pillow, his sword, and canari of dolo from which the sovereign draws frequent and abundant libations along the way.

"At night the Moro Naba, in disguise and accompanied by a single soronś, wanders incognito through the various village quarters in order to find out what is going on without being recognized.

[782] "On certain set dates, he goes to localities named Sabaye and Saraboutenga, not far from Ouagadougou, where he sacrifices beeves, sheep, and chickens.

644 595 "The Moro Naba has very numerous wives. In addition to those he marries himself, there are those of his predecessor and all those that devolve to him in the course of his reign, among them, in certain cases, the adulterous wives of his subjects.

644 595 684 "The sovereign's wives do not all live with him. They are settled in villages ruled by eunuchs and near which no one could come, on pain of death, prior to our occupation. Every year the faithfulness of the Moro Naba's wives is checked by submitting them to the same test as the soronś. Adultery is punished by death for the wife as well as her partner. It even seems that adultery with one of the sovereign's wives is regarded /573/ as the least pardonable crime a man can commit. In fact, the nakomsé or sons of chiefs are liable to the death penalty only in this case.

593 The wife must obey her husband. The latter has the right to strike
562 her in case of disobedience, adultery, etc. He cannot break one of her limbs, or kill her.

595 Polygamy. —Polygamy is the general rule, at least theoretically. That is to say, the Mossi may have as many spouses as he wishes as long as he can minister to their needs.

585 In actual fact, only rich people have several wives. The majority
589 are monogamous by necessity, and there are even bachelors. As a passing remark, this applies to the Sudanese Negroes in general, for everywhere nature creates approximately as many men as women, and it is hard to visualize how in any one region each man could have several wives. However, in spite of the occurrence of bachelors and a large number of truly monogamous people, the question still stands. It is solved if we bear in mind that girls are married much earlier than men. This results in a much larger number of women than men "in active service," if I may be permitted to say so. Undoubtedly, this (along with the occurrence of bachelors and a considerable number of monogamists), takes care of the objection which naturally arises when we speak of polygamy. /243/

163 It may be, let us add, that the number of girls born here is a little higher than that of boys, as has been noted in England, for example.

595 By way of figures on polygamy, let us state that the Moro Naba
643 Bango, the last one who reigned before the arrival of the French, had
645 about 80 wives. The Naba Koboga, who ruled from 1902 to 1914, had 30 or 40. The present Rassam Naba, one of the ministers of the Moro Naba, has 30 or 35 wives. These are, of course, exceptional figures if the total population of Yatenga is taken into account. In any case, the rich men, notables, and men in easy circumstances always have several wives.

595 Organization of the polygamous household. —"The first wife," says Vadier, "enjoys a certain authority over the others. It is she who transmits her husband's orders to the other wives and who notifies him of their wants, who supervises the preparation of meals and apportions the food. In addition, it is she who comes and tells the [841] husband that such-and-such a wife is no longer in a state of zim and can now fulfill her conjugal duties.

"Aside from this special prerogative enjoyed by the first wife, all wives have the same rights and duties. In principle, each wife must share in turn her husband's bed. Nevertheless, he is free to summon his favorite wife during the day."

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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Karême), celebrate the great festival of Ramadan and the lesser festivals, and aspire to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Most of the Moslems can lead prayers, but only about one-tenth of their number can read and recite the Koran. However, today the masters (*karasambas*) of the 32 Koranic schools in the district are endeavoring to instruct the many boys and few girls in reading the Koran and understanding Moslem theology.

The Karême is observed by most adult Moslems in the community with the exception of invalids and working men. Moslems say that the fast is intended to turn the minds of the people to God, and they distinguish between the Moslems "of the mouth" who break the fast and those "of the heart" who fast until Ramadan. The crescent moon of Ramadan is greeted with guns and general rejoicing and the following morning the Moslems gather at the tomb of Ngado to give praises to God; during the rest of the day they pay homage to the chief and visit their friends. However, a change in the traditional observance of Ramadan is expected, because one of the Moslem leaders objects to the ceremony at the tomb of Ngado. He feels that some Moslems are beginning to regard the tomb of the first Moslem as an earth shrine or Tengkougre.

So far, only five of the more prominent Moslems in the district have made or are making the pilgrimage to Mecca. The first man made the voyage about seven years ago, and is now conducting a Koranic school in a neighboring district. His brother went to Mecca about two years ago and is now the senior *El Hadj* in the district. Of the two men who were on the pilgrimage when I arrived in the district, one has since died near the Red Sea and the other is still away. One other man left for Mecca and returned to the district during my stay. Most of the pilgrims now fly to Mecca; only two men followed the traditional route through Ghana, Kano, Lake Chad, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (now Sudan), and on to Mecca. In general, all pilgrims have used their own resources for the trip, but they receive some help from their lineage brothers and from the other Moslems in the district and in Ouagadougou.

The pilgrimage to Mecca represents the greatest event in the lives of the district Moslems. When the last pilgrim left, a great crowd gathered at his house and prayed for his safe journey, and some even accompanied him to Ouagadougou and remained there until he left. The Moslems and many pagans of the district, under the command of the district chief, cultivated his fields during his absence. And when the new El Hadj returned, a large crowd accompanied him to his house with shouts of joy. There he killed a sheep in thanksgiving, sprinkled the crowd with holy water from Mecca, and recounted his experiences. His listeners were impressed by his airplane flight and the description of Mecca, but they showed the greatest interest when he said that Mecca women covered their faces and that most Meccan men were monogamous. The local Moslems smiled when they heard this bit of news from one of their members, but I have seen them scowl when discussing the monogamous practice desired by the Christians.

The attitudes of Moslems differ very little from those of the other Mossi as regards children and polygyny. They say that they do not believe in the

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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794 efficacy of ancestor veneration and do not "kill chickens" to the ancestors, but
595 they maintain that it is a man's duty to have many wives so that he may have
842 children to succeed him. Furthermore, since Mohammed himself decreed that his followers may keep four wives, provided they treat each with the same degree of kindness, there is no conflict between Islamic tenets and Mossi practice of polygny. The average Moslem has two wives, but even the few men in the district who have more than four wives do not appear overly concerned about
[582] transgressing the tenets of their faith. Mossi Moslems have not adopted the paternal parallel cousin marriage so common among other Moslems, and show surprise when told that Islam permits such marriages. However, they have modified their marriage behavior to harmonize with what they consider an Islamic tenet that "a man should not marry the widow of his father." The Moslem Mossi profess to look with horror on these marriages among their pagan brothers, preferring the levirate instead.

794 The Moslems' attitude toward the low status of women in Mossi society
562 has not changed, and in one respect it can even be said that this attitude has been strengthened. Many Moslem wives now cover their faces, and many El Hadjis have attempted to place their wives in purdah by preventing them from going to the market for fear they would come in contact with pagan men. The development of this practice is running counter to the growing emancipation of Mossi women, who have just begun to leave their villages for periodic visits to the larger towns. Nevertheless, the important fact is that the Mecca pilgrims have the opportunity to see Moslem women playing roles which are forbidden or unknown to Mossi women. And while it is true that the Mossi pilgrims would not easily adopt and foster monogamy, their receptivity to new Islamic beliefs and customs might have a liberating effect on their treatment of women. Once institutional and cultural changes have been accepted by the El Hadjis, they are likely to spread quite rapidly throughout the society because men who have visited Mecca are believed to have returned filled with wisdom and understanding.

797 Christianity came to the Mossi on January 24, 1900, shortly after French conquest. As noted above, the first missionaries were well treated, but the Mossi balked at the attempts at conversion. Nevertheless, by 1919 the White Fathers of the Catholic missions had established several centers, among which was the district of Manga where this study was conducted. Manga is considered a Catholic district, but there are only 3,000 Catholics out of a population of 124,000—which also includes 9,200 Moslems and five Protestants.
[184] Thus, in contrast to Moslem Nobéré, which has no Catholics or Protestants, Manga, like most districts in Mossi territory, has a Moslem community.

The conversion of the Mossi in Manga to Catholicism follows the classical pattern of missionary proselytization in the country. Monsignor Socquet (1956:62) states that the Mossi always react to attempts at conversion with the statement: " 'We are looking at our chief,' that is to say, 'We will follow our chief in conversion as in all other matters. If he is favorable to it, then we will not go against his will.' " Socquet concludes: "It is thus understandable

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When a young Catholic receives a wife through the mission, he may visit her father and pay the customary respect by giving him kola nuts and brass coins. The father of a mission girl may accept or reject his son-in-law as he sees fit, but formerly he could not defy the power of the missions. 797 582 634

A pagan youth who wishes to marry one of the mission girls has to discuss the matter with the priests and swear publicly that he will become a Christian. Before 1946 the young man had to fulfill his promise or be intimidated by the chief and the missionaries until he relented or fled the district. Today, however, the priests usually abandon their efforts to obtain the conversion of the young men after three months have passed. In some cases the young men take their wives and move to other districts, and return only after the girls have given up Catholicism. Despite the lure of wives from the mission, not many young men become Christians on this account because the Mossi are still concerned primarily with family relationships and the effect that conversion would have on these relationships. [596]

The church's prohibition of polygyny is by far the most serious bar to the spread of Catholicism. Many men do not adopt Catholicism simply because they fear that monogamous marriages would not produce children. Father Paternot (Considine 1954:103) has cited a study purporting to show that Christian Mossi have more children than the pagans, but the ordinary people of the district would not accept the facts he presented. They cite their personal experience to the contrary. Dim Delobson (1934:136), a Mossi converted to Catholicism, states: 797 595 842

> A certain number of Christians of my acquaintance whose wives did not have children during the first years of marriage had recourse to magical practices in order to get children. These simple people thought that although they had an omnipotent God beside them, they could impudently—after all the good priests will not know about it—ask the little, but also powerful gods to grant them some material favors here on earth. When the gods given children were taken for Holy Baptism, they were given Christian names instead of the names of the earth shrines, and they did not wear magical charms which would have indicated to the priest the real state of affairs. Nevertheless, the children were bathed in water to which magical potions were added, and when the mothers went to visit their parents, sacrifices of chickens were given to the benevolent Tengkougas.

The Mossi's strong desire for children is admittedly one of the main reasons for leaving the Catholic Church so that they can take other spouses in addition to barren ones. The church has now belatedly recognized this problem and, knowing that it cannot prevent men from taking plural wives, allows them to come to church but prohibits them from taking the Mass.

Many cultural factors besides the desire for children make polygyny important for the Mossi, and make conversion detrimental to the functioning of their family system. Because of lineage opposition to their conversions, some converts are forced to establish nuclear households—a practice out of harmony with the normal rhythm of Mossi life. The reason for this disharmony is that Mossi women married to Catholics must work alone instead of with [594] 595 797 182

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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595 797 182 co-wives and other women of the extended families. Even the Catholic husbands would not help their wives with household tasks requiring more than one person, nor would they violate tradition by chatting with their wives except at night in their huts. Another factor is that after the Mossi Christian [846] woman has given birth to a child, she follows the traditional custom and goes back to her parents' home to remain there during the two or three years' lactation period. This imposes a great hardship on a Catholic husband because during this time he is left without wife or helpmate. In the extended family household there would have been women to take care of a man's material needs, and his mistresses would have taken care of his sexual needs. The Catholic can and does ask the mission for a young girl to take care of his material needs, but of course she is not expected to satisfy his sexual de- [837] sires. Obviously this arrangement is not satisfactory, and many Catholic men, with the acquiescence of their wives, keep mistresses. Dim Delobson comments:

> Ouagadougou has a large number of Christians, but does this mean that these people in their love for the church respect all her rules? Alas! there are a large number of Christians who oblige their lawful wives to leave the conjugal couch and make way for the accommodation of mistresses . . . in conformity with the old custom. But this is a subject which is too delicate to discuss further. I only note it in passing: *Noli me tangere* (1934:169).

797 794 Despite the influence of tradition on Mossi Catholics, I feel it would be a mistake to say that the complexity of Catholic dogma is one of the drawbacks to missionary success in this country. One Mossi has already been made a bishop of the Catholic Church, and most of the proselytizing in Manga falls on the two Mossi priests and the five Mossi nuns. Under the supervision of two White Fathers, the Catholic children and adults are acquainted with the dogma and rituals of the church. The festivals are well attended and celebrated with as much pomp as possible. Although the Mass is sung in Latin, the Mossi have adapted some of their traditional tunes to the Mass, and use their own language for prayers and hymns. Catholics observe all the sacraments including Confession—a sacrament which is hazardous from the Mossi point of view, because man must lay bare his innermost thoughts to the priests, who, in the final analysis, are Europeans and thus administrators.

It is true that even the staunchest Catholics in Manga have not abandoned all belief in traditional rituals and religious credos. For example, many Mossi Catholics believe in the existence of sorcerers, but the Catholic Church [754] does not recognize the existence of sorcerers or such evil forces (I have met White Fathers who believe that there are unexplainable psychic and physical phenomena in Africa), and moreover has no way of dealing with them. "But," says Dim Delobson (1934:136), "the Mossi believe so strongly in the power of such entities, that even those converted to Christianity cannot always escape the action of malevolent practitioners." The result is that many Catholics desert the church when they believe that only traditional specialists can help them with personal problems. Catholic families easily aban-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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fathers died. In this way the rulers not only retained the allegiance of the boys' fathers but had a unique opportunity to determine whether these boys were qualified to succeed to the nam.

The life of a page was confining, even if sometimes very rewarding. Pages were bound by the demands of the ruler, whose every wish had to be satisfied immediately. A quarrelsome ruler was a terror to his pages, who had to bear silently his insults and blows. On the other hand, a considerate monarch permitted or encouraged his pages to profit from the small political intrigues in which they were invariably involved. Prospective district chiefs "made friends" with pages to find out whether their suits were progressing, or to whom they might usefully offer gifts. The pages used any money they might procure to buy clothes for themselves, to supplement the clothing and presents they received from their relatives. Every page was "adopted" by one of the royal wives, who prepared his meals and took care of him. In return, he helped this woman cultivate her field when his presence was not required by the monarch. When a page completed his service satisfactorily, he received a pughsiudga as a wife. If his work had not been satisfactory, he was simply dismissed.

The only woman who played any significant role at the court of the Mogho Naba was the Pughtiema, his head wife. She was the only wife to whom he presented his friends, and whom he allowed his subjects to visit. This woman, who was commonly the widow of the former Mogho Naba, was often chosen because she was past childbearing age: she was thus older and wiser than the other wives, less preoccupied with children, and above the sexual jealousies that may often develop in polygynous households. She arbitrated among the wives and stood *in loco parentis* to the younger ones, whom she instructed and advised. She served also as official hostess to the ancestors during the annual propitiatory rituals. It was her duty to prepare the millet beer and millet water for the sacrifices to the ancestors, who were believed to feast at her hut before they visited the rest of the household. In addition, it was she who prepared to accompany the Mogho Naba to La each day. Lastly, it was her duty to introduce any new royal wife to the ancestors, and to ask them to watch over this potential mother of their descendants.

The ruler inherited some of his wives from his father; some he received from his many friends and vassals; and others he selected from among his pughsiudse. Crozat reports that Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890-96) allegedly had a hundred wives. Crozat did not see this many women at Wobogo's court, understandably, since most of a ruler's wives lived in villages, where they were guarded by eunuchs.[23] Of the substantial number of royal wives

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595 who did live at the palace, only a small minority prepared the ruler's meals
644 and shared his bed. Dim Delobson reports that Mogho Naba Kom II (1905–42) had thirty-seven wives. His son, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57), had twenty.[34] The present Mogho Naba, Kougri, recently married according to Western tradition and is officially monogamous.[35] There seems to be a general trend toward fewer wives among Mossi chiefs.

643 Mossi rulers never married for the purpose of forming state alliances,
581 and their marriages had no political significance. The Mogho Naba's mar-
582 riages were exogamous with regard to the royal lineage and to his mother's minimal lineage. Aside from these restrictions, however, the Mogho Naba could marry women from any Mossi lineage or group, including serfs, slaves, and foreign populations. It is said that when Mogho Naba Sanum (1850–90) despaired of having an heir by a Mossi woman, he took a Fulani wife.[36]

643 The Mogho Naba had no formal wedding ceremony. The task of intro-
585 ducing a new wife to the royal harem fell to the Pughtiema. She and her
[302] assistants welcomed the wife in a prescribed fashion. First they shaved all the hair from her body. They then bathed her in warm water to which shea butter and ritual herbs had been added, and during the bath they recited the ruler's genealogy to impress her with her new status.[37] The Pughtiema advised her on the need for proper deportment, and warned her that
[301] adultery was punished by death. To close the ceremony, a smith fastened to the girl's wrists and ankles the silver or brass bracelets that identified her as a wife of the Mogho Naba. If the bride was still a child, she was often allowed to return to her father's house until she reached childbearing age. If she was past the age of puberty, her marriage was consummated without further ceremony, and she joined the ranks of the ruler's wives.

644 The wives who lived in the palace were divided into three groups. The
595 first group included the wives who lived with the Pughtiema in a section of the palace harem called the *zaka sanga* ("large courtyard"). These women were all past childbearing age and no longer received nocturnal visits from the Mogho Naba. They had their own fields in the vicinity of the palace and cultivated them with the aid of the samande-kamba, the pages they had adopted, and their own children. The women of the second group, those of the *zugbilin* ("small courtyard"), were mostly in their thirties or forties and still sexually active. They received occasional visits from the Mogho Naba, but fewer than his younger wives. These women also cultivated their fields with the help of the young men of the court.

The third group of wives, the *dogunba* ("keepers of the household"), was the most important. The dogunba prepared the ruler's meals and satis-

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fied his sexual desires. Since these women were in the monarch's favor, they were better dressed than the other wives and received more attention from him. The dogunba generally cultivated a large field in common with the aid of the palace retainers, but some insisted on cultivating their own fields instead. Like the other wives, the dogunba usually lived in huts of their own. Childless women sometimes shared the same hut until one of them became pregnant and had to set up a hut for herself and her child.

Those wives who lived in special villages under the supervision of eunuchs rarely went to the palace. Usually, they were past childbearing age or had lost favor with the monarch. They cultivated plots of land, spun cotton, and prepared locust-bean flour, locust-bean "balls," and shea butter. They kept a part of the produce for their own use and sent the remainder to the palace stores; the same arrangement obtained for all three categories of palace wives.

The Mogho Naba's heir was usually born while his father was still Crown Prince. He was never born in his father's compound because, unlike other Mossi women, the wife of a Mogho Naba or Crown Prince returned to her father's house for confinement. As soon as she announced her pregnancy, the Pughtiema or one of the older wives held a ceremony to notify the ancestors. Once the rite had been completed, the wife was sent to her relatives for fear that she might be harmed by her less fortunate co-wives. If the child was a boy, the ruler or Crown Prince was notified immediately, because the important privileges of a first-born hinged upon this notification. Since several wives of the Mogho Naba might be pregnant at the same time and errors might be made about the onset and duration of pregnancy, primogeniture had to be established immediately to forestall dynastic conflicts. For example, it is commonly believed that the present Doulougou Naba was born several days before Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57) but was deprived of the nam because the messenger who brought news of his birth reached Mogho Naba Kom after the messenger who announced Sagha's birth. Undoubtedly, such allegations were sometimes used to foster and support dynastic rebellions.

So strong was the fear that the most likely heir to the nam would be harmed by jealous co-wives that the child and his mother never returned to the palace except for brief visits on ceremonial occasions. The young prince remained with his mother's relatives and was guarded and educated by servants sent from the palace. If his father was on the throne at Ouagadougou when the boy reached the age of ten, he was formally installed as chief of Djiba district, the traditional seat of the Crown Prince. If his father was not on the throne, the boy remained with his mother's relatives and went to Djiba when his grandfather died and his father was installed as Mogho Naba.

did not derive any revenue from his judicial functions. He could not levy a fine against any malefactor. However, his intermediary position between the villagers and the district chief did permit him to obtain some revenue whenever commodities moved from one level to the other.

The officials who administered the villages for the district chief received part of their revenue from the villages under their charge. These local administrators had no courts or retainers comparable to those at the provincial level. However, they did have a large number of wives who contributed valuable agricultural labor. These administrators were permitted to ask the village chiefs for sosose on their own fields several times during the planting season, but—unlike the district chiefs—they were not permitted to have the villagers cultivate special fields for them. In return for any help received, they had to provide food and drink for the workers.

The administrator received most of his revenue as a by-product of active duty in the villages. When he visited a village or transmitted a message to a village chief, he almost invariably received a sheep, a goat, a chicken, or some millet, from the village chief. He also acquired large quantities of goods during the village interregnum: he received gifts from the chief's heirs during the chief's funeral; he received additional presents when they took the fado to the district chief; he could prolong the interregnum in order to receive as many bribes as possible from contenders for the nam; and he was handsomely rewarded when the candidate he had backed was finally installed in office.

The extended family was the basic socio-economic unit supporting the Mossi political organization. The Yirisoba received land rights in his saka from his Sakakasma, who had obtained his rights from the village chief. An extended family in need of additional land would seek help from its Sakakasma or its Boodkasma. When the family no longer needed this land, it reverted to the lineage. If all the land granted to the lineage was already occupied, the extended family, through its lineage head, asked the village chief for more land. The chief usually granted this request, unless he had no more weogho available. In this case, the needy Yirisoba sometimes tried to borrow land from his non-kin neighbors. Such a step was not undertaken lightly, however. If a man borrowed land from his own lineage members or from the chief, the land rights reverted to its donors without difficulty. However, if he borrowed land from another lineage and either he or his benefactor died without assuring the return of the land, litigation often ensued. In some cases a man would seek land from his lineage brothers in another village, who let him use some of their land with their chief's permission. Some Yirisobadamba even asked their district chief for